

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 SCCT-01

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P R 181758Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4640

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

USEC BRUSSELS 1978

USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, SP

SUBJ: EXTREMIST RIGHTISTS ATTACK HOAC HEADQUARTERS

REF: A) MADRID 7833; B) MADRID 0488;

BEGIN SUMMARY: FIVE MASKED ASSAILANTS ATTACKED HEADQUARTERS OF HOAC, THE LABOR ORGANIZATION OF CATHOLIC ACTION, IN AN EPISODE SIMILAR TO LAST NOVEMBER'S ATTACK ON OPPOSITION LAWYERS IN A MADRID LAW OFFICE. THIS NEW EPISODE, APPARENTLY PERPETRATED BY EXTREMIST

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RIGHTISTS, HAS CAUSED EMBARRASSMENT TO NEW GOVT. AND CREATED

AN IRRITANT WITH THE CHURCH. END SUMMARY.

1. WEEKEND PRESS DESCRIBES GROTESQUE AND APPARENTLY POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED ASSAULT BY FIVE UNKNOWN MASKED MEN ON MADRID HEADQUARTERS OF HOAC, THE CATHOLIC ACTION WORKER BROTHERHOOD, ON EVENING FEB 13. FIVE ASSAILANTS FORCED WAY INTO HOAC HEADQUARTERS AND LOCKED UP SIX HOAC LIBRARIANS AND TWO OTHER HOAC MEMBERS IN BATHROOM, BEATING THOSE WHO PROTESTED OR ATTEMPTED TO RESIST. THEY THEN RANSACKED AND DESTROYED HOAC PREMISES, RETURNED TO EIGHT PRISONERS AND SPRAYED THEIR

FACES WITH PAINT, SET OFF TEAR GAS CANNISTERS AND SMOKE BOMBS, FIRED A FEW REAL BULLETS INTO WALLS, AND DEPARTED TAKING WITH THEM SLIGHTLY MORE THAN 100 DOLLARS IN CASH WHICH THEY HAD FOUND. REPORTEDLY FIVE MASKED ASSAILANTS DESCRIBED THEMSELVES TO THEIR HOAC PRISONERS AS A COMMANDO OF "FRANCOISTS", "NAZIS", AND "FASCISTS", LEADING TO CONCLUSION THAT GROUP OF EXTREMISTS RIGHTISTS PERPETRATED THIS BIZARRE ATTACK.

2. HOAC IS A LEGAL CATHOLIC ACTION WORKER ORGANIZATION WHICH IS PROTECTED AND GRANTED LEGAL STATUS UNDER 1953 CONCORDAT BETWEEN GOS AND VATICAN. DURING 1960'S, HOAC WAS IN VANGUARD OF LABOR PROTEST MOVEMENTS AND MANY MEMBERS OF CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS USED HOAC AND LEGAL PROTECTION IT AFFORDED AS COVER FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES, SOMETHING WHICH OFTEN GOT HOAC INTO TROUBLE WITH BOTH CIVIL AUTHORITIES AND THEN STILL-CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC CHURCH HIERARCHY. IN MORE RECENT YEARS HOAC'S POLITICAL ACTIVISM SUBSIDED AS ITS MORE ACTIVE MILITANTS LEFT HOAC TO OPENLY PARTICIPATE IN CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS, AND HOAC RETURNED TO ITS PASTORAL FUNCTION OF CATHOLIC WORKER EDUCATION. WITHIN PAST YEAR, HOWEVER, SOMEWHAT DORMANT HOAC HAS ONCE AGAIN COMMENCED TO BECOME ASSOCIATED WITH LABOR OPPOSITION CAUSES UNDER A NEW LEADERSHIP. THUS A MONTH AGO DURING RECENT MADRID STRIKE WAVE POLICE BURST INTO A MEETING JAN 16 (REF B) AT HOAC PREMISES AND ARRESTED 119 PERSONS FROM VARIOUS CLANDESTINE LABOR OPPOSITION GROUPS WHO WERE SEEKING TO SET UP A MADRID STRIKE COORDINATION COMMITTEE, ALTHOUGH THOSE ARRESTED WERE ALL SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED.

3. COMMENT: EPISODE BEARS REMARKABLE SIMILARITY IN EXECUTION TO NOV 6 ATTACK AND BEATINGS PERPETRATED ON FIVE OPPOSITION POLITICIANS AND TWO VENEZUELAN JOURNALISTS IN MADRID LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LAWYER'S OFFICE WHERE ASSAILANTS CALLED THOSE PRESENT "ANTI-FRANCO PIGS" AND OTHER EPITHETS (REF A). THIS TIME NO ONE IS SUGGESTING, AS THEY WERE LAST NOVEMBER, THAT ASSAILANTS MAY HAVE BEEN ACTING WITH CONNIVANCE AND ENCOURAGEMENT FROM HIGH LEVELS WITHIN THE POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES. THE MILITARY PRECISION OF THE EPISODE, HOWEVER, WOULD APPEAR TO SUGGEST THAT PERPETRATORS ARE "GUERRILLAS OF CHRIST THE KING" OR SOME OTHER WELL-ORGANIZED EXTREMIST RIGHTIST GROUP, AND POSSIBILITY

THEY MIGHT INCLUDE OFF-DUTY POLICEMEN OR PERSONS STILL-CONNECTED TO POLICE WHO ARE ACTING ENTIRELY ON THEIR OWN CANNOT BE ENTIRELY EXCLUDED. AT MINIMUM, THIS EPISODE WILL CAUSE SOME EMBARRASSMENT TO NEW GOVT AND PARTICULARLY TO LIBERAL INTERIOR MINISTER FRAGA, SINCE IT APPEARS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT ORGANIZED RIGHTIST VIOLENCE CAN STILL BE CARRIED OUT WITH RELATIVE EASE DESPITE EFFORTS OF NEW GOVT TO PREVENT IT, AND IT WILL PUT PRESSURE ON FRAGA TO MAKE A STRONG EFFORT TO TRACK DOWN THE CULPRITS. ADDITIONALLY EPISODE CAN ONLY SERVE TO ADD AN IRRITANT TO CURRENTLY SMOOTH CHURCH STATE RELATIONS SINCE IT IS DIRECTED AT A CHURCH-CONNECTED ORGANIZATION, AND IT ALSO ANTAGONIZES MANY WORKERS BECAUSE IT WAS CARRIED OUT AGAINST A LABOR-CONNECTED ORGANIZATION. POSSIBILITY ATTACK MIGHT HAVE BEEN PERPETRATED BY SOME EXTREMIST LEFTIST GROUP AS A PROVOCATION DESIGNED TO APPEAR TO IMPLICATE EXTREMIST RIGHTISTS, CANNOT BE EXCLUDED.

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